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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY



**LILLY FAMILY  
SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
Indianapolis

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# Introduction

“Amongst democratic nations, each generation is a new people,” wrote Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859, French political thinker and historian best known for his works *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution*). In the present day, this truth is profoundly felt—America is undergoing a substantial demographic transition. The Baby Boomer generation is approaching retirement and the younger Millennial generation is establishing its economic influence for the first time.

Since individual giving is the largest source of charitable giving in the United States, comprising nearly two-thirds of all philanthropic donations, this is the time for donors and advisors who work closely with individual donors to develop a better understanding of these distinct, yet connected, generations.

As executive vice president of the Pew Research Center, Paul Taylor states in *The Next America*:

*Millennials and Boomers are the lead characters in the looming generational showdown by dint of their vast number and strategic location in the life cycle. But what gives the drama an almost Shakespearean richness is something more: they're also each other's children and parents, bound together in an intricate web of love, support, anxiety, resentment, and interdependence.*

While the Millennial generation is more racially diverse and politically liberal than its parents' and grandparents' generations were, shared preferences, environments, income, wealth, and consumption patterns, and other determinants of individual giving are still being passed between the increasingly interdependent generations: Pre-Boomers (born before 1946), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), and Millennials (born 1981-present).

The inter-connectedness of these distinct generations has been a popular area of study recently and is often discussed by the media. However, analyzing individual giving behaviors through a traditional generational lens conflates several key factors, namely age, period, and cohort effects. “Age effects are the consequences of growing older, either of human individuals or of other entities. Period effects are the consequences of influences that vary through time. And cohort effects are the consequences of being born (or coming into existence by some other means) at different times” (Glenn, 2007).

Much is yet to be known about how family and social environments shape children's attitudes about giving back and how specific generational factors influence children's giving behaviors. While extensive developmental psychology literature has produced evidence of the causal effect of role-modeling in laboratory studies (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998), very little is known about parent role-modeling in children's natural settings (the family).

The *Women Give 2013* report, written and researched by the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy Women's Philanthropy Institute in partnership with the United Nations Foundation, looked at the importance of role-modeling for the development of prosocial behavior, stating that:

*People can learn through observation and model this behavior by watching others ... This type of learning can be used to explain a wide variety of behaviors and can consist of an actual individual demonstrating or acting out a behavior, as well as a verbal instructional model which involves descriptions and explanations of a behavior. Research provides evidence that both role-modeling and conversations emphasizing empathy can have a positive effect on children's giving.*

Our project continues to examine an underexplored topic—intra-family connections across generations (as opposed to inter-family connections)—and takes it one step further. The study provides a more useful framework for understanding the transmission of giving attitudes and behaviors within families than what was previously available using a traditional generational lens.

We offer new insights into the factors associated with generosity between family members and provide a first-of-its-kind look at the transmission of giving behaviors from grandparents to grandchildren, in addition to looking at the parent-child dynamic. Our project seeks to illuminate ways that the tradition of giving gets passed down through the generations and families.

The project stems from the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy's commitment to fostering research and promoting linkages between researchers and practitioners. Philanthropic support for this research project was provided by Vanguard Charitable, which hopes to offer valuable insight into how generosity is transmitted across generations and families.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Key determinants of philanthropic behavior include the following socio-demographic characteristics: gender, marital status, age, religious attendance, wealth, income, and education. Rates of participation in charitable giving increase with wealth and income (Schervish and Havens, 1995; Wilhelm et al., 2006). Charitable giving is also positively associated with education (Bekkers, 2006; Rooney et al., 2001; Wilhelm et al., 2006). Finally, overall charitable giving increases with religious attendance (Schervish, O'Herlihy and Havens, 2006; Mesch et al., 2006; Wilhelm et al., 2007; Zech, 2000).

Moving beyond socio-demographic determinants of philanthropic behavior, Steinberg and Wilhelm (2003) examined how parents influence the giving behaviors of their adult children. They found that adult children whose parents give are themselves nine percentage points more likely to give, even after accounting for income, education, wealth and other factors that influence giving. Wilhelm et al., (2008) found the parent-child correlation in religious giving is as strong as the parent-child correlation in income and wealth, while the parent-child correlation in secular giving is as strong as the parent-child correlation in consumption.

Additional research provides further evidence of the strength of parental effects on children's helping behavior. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996) found that adult children who recalled seeing "someone in [their] family help others" were more likely to give. Janoski and Wilson (1995) showed that parental volunteering (during their children's adult years) was associated with both their children's current and future volunteering. Bekkers (2003) found a positive relationship between adult children's volunteering and whether they recalled their parents' volunteering during their teenage years.

There are several key mechanisms that facilitate this transfer of charitable behavior from parents to their children and grandparents to their grandchildren. Grandparents, parents, and (grand)children often share the following attributes that can lead to intergenerational connections in behaviors:

- Shared preferences
- Shared environment
- Shared income, wealth, and consumption patterns

Social norms or values also influence the generational transmission of giving behaviors. People who do not follow these norms may experience negative social repercussions or other consequences of their atypical behavior.

Shared beliefs about giving can be passed from grandparents to their grandchildren and from parents to their children through the socialization process (the process by which children and adults learn from others) and through social exposure. Early in life, we begin learning from others and continue learning socially throughout the rest of our lives.

Other relevant reasons why we expect intra-family traditions of giving include Schervish and Havens' (1997) suggestion that giving may be caused by an experience in one's youth and Boris' (1987) conclusion that giving is associated with religious heritage, personal philosophy, social responsibility, and political beliefs, which are often transmitted through one's family of origin.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To learn more about the ways in which family members influence each other's giving behaviors, our study asked the following two questions:

- ▶ How closely do parents and grandparents match their children and grandchildren in terms of their philanthropic priorities?
- ▶ How do socio-demographic factors explain the similarity or dissimilarity in philanthropic priorities between parents and their children?

## INNOVATIONS IN THE STUDY

The main innovation in our study is the investigation of charitable giving behavior across three generations—examining grandparents, parents, and adult children in a single set of analyses. To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to look at giving across three generations (using a longitudinal data set).

Second, we expanded upon previous analyses by examining the strength and/or consistency of (grand)parental giving over time and the implications for their (grand)children's giving.

Third, we explored the role of several socio-demographic characteristics on intra-family giving and volunteering behaviors.

Finally, we used case studies to augment our Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS) findings and bring the data analysis to life.

# Overview of findings

## GIVING WITHIN FAMILIES

*Note: Findings that cite children and grandchildren refer to adult children and adult grandchildren of at least 18 years of age. Detailed definitions are available in the Generational samples section beginning on page 6.*

- ▶ **Parents’ decision to give** to charitable organizations positively influences their **children’s decision to give** to charitable organizations.
- ▶ **Parents and their children give similarly to:**
  - a. Religious organizations,
  - b. International charitable organizations,
  - c. Environmental organizations, and
  - d. Arts-related organizations.
- ▶ **Parents whose giving is more concentrated** (they give to fewer subsectors) positively influence their **children’s religious giving**.
- ▶ **Parents’ decision to volunteer** with charitable organizations:
  - a. Positively influences their **children’s decision to volunteer** with charitable organizations, and
  - b. Positively influences their **children’s decision to give** to charitable organizations.
- ▶ The philanthropic **giving priorities** of **parents** and their **children** are more closely matched than are the philanthropic giving priorities of **grandparents** and their **grandchildren**.
- ▶ **Grandparents and their grandchildren give:**
  - a. Similarly to **arts-related** organizations (high-net-worth sample only), but
  - b. Dissimilarly to **basic needs-related** organizations.

Overview of findings *continues on next page.*

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

- ▶ The **overall giving** of parents with the following attributes has a stronger influence on their children's overall giving than their counterpart:
  - a. **Age**: Overall giving by parents who are **closer in age** to their children has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than giving by parents who are further in age from their children.
  - b. **Family Structure**: Overall giving by parents from **intact families** has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than parents from families who experienced a marital transition.
  - c. **Helping Behavior**: Overall giving by parents who **spend time helping** their children has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than parents who do not spend time helping their children.
- ▶ The **religious giving** of parents with the following attributes has a stronger influence on their children's religious giving than their counterpart:
  - a. **Race**: Religious giving by parents has a **stronger influence** on children's religious giving in **white households** than in black households.
  - b. **Head of Household Gender**: Religious giving by parents in **male-headed households** has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than in female-headed households.
  - c. **Education**: Religious giving by **college-educated** parents has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than religious giving by non-college-educated parents.
  - d. **Income/Wealth**: Religious giving by **high-net-worth** parents has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than religious giving by non-high-net-worth parents.
  - e. **Religious Attendance**: For children of **high-attending parents**, the likelihood they'll give to **religious** causes **increases** if their parents give to religious causes, while it **decreases** if their parents give to **secular** causes. For grandchildren of **low-attending grandparents**, their religious giving also **decreases** if their grandparents give to **secular** causes.

## ESTATE GIVING

- ▶ People **prefer** to leave their **estates** to **relatives** rather than to religious organizations or secular charitable organizations.
  - a. For **grandparents**, the **second highest preference** is to leave their **estate** to **religious** organizations.
  - b. For **parents and children**, the **second highest preference** is to leave their **estate** to **secular** charitable organizations.



# Generational samples

## DESCRIPTION OF DATA

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, this study includes a comprehensive look at philanthropic trends within families, offering the perspective of a wide range of families over time, as well as individual commentary on giving from families at a single point in time.

### Philanthropy Panel Study



For more than a decade, the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy's signature research project, the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS), has tracked the philanthropic behaviors of families throughout their lives. The PPS is part of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)—the world's longest-running, nationally representative household panel study. The PSID has tracked the behaviors of the same families and their descendants for more than 40 years along the dimensions of employment, earnings, income, wealth, pensions, health, family structure, child care, housing, expenditures, use of government programs, education, and informal assistance given and received.

Although generosity is widely understood to be a dynamic process, much knowledge about generosity drawn from household surveys is based on cross-sectional data. This approach does not cast light on the dynamics of generosity. By using a panel studying the same households over time, researchers can uncover factors that impact the practice of generosity using analytical methods that seek to redress some of the problems arising from the usage of cross-sectional data analysis.

The PPS is the nation's largest and only ongoing study of philanthropy, which surveys the giving behaviors of approximately 8,000 families every two years. Because of the extensive information the PSID collects, PPS data can also capture how household giving behaviors are influenced by a variety of demographic variables, including those related to families' finances, geography, health, composition, and lifestyle.

The longitudinal data available in the PPS provide a unique opportunity to conduct new research on intergenerational connections in various aspects of helping behaviors. The relatively long time-series data provide a rare opportunity for researchers to construct family and individual experiences through the life stages, from birth through childhood to early adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

### Vanguard Charitable Client Interviews



Representatives from Vanguard Charitable conducted client interviews with five families (18 individuals) on 11 different calls for a total of 375 minutes of audio recordings. Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes and included one to four individuals interviewed simultaneously. Two of the families interviewed included individuals from three generations (grandparents, parents, and children). Another two families interviewed included two generations (parents and children, and grandparents and parents). One family only provided interview data from one generation (parents).

<sup>1</sup> Please see the *Technical Appendix* for additional details on the waves of PPS data used in each analysis, an explanation of the research methodology, and the control variables included in the regression analyses.

Interviewees answered questions on traditions of giving in their families, such as where they donated or volunteered their time. They were asked to recall how their childhood, as well as how their grandparents' or parents' charitable choices, may have shaped their philanthropic priorities. The interviews closed with questions about how they may, in turn, be shaping the next generation's giving interests.

The donor interviews complement and add to the PPS findings by showcasing families firsthand and their perspectives and memories of shared giving traditions.

To preserve their anonymity, these families will be referred to as Family A-E, without reference to individual names. The table below shows the number of individuals from each intra-family generation who were interviewed, by family label.

**Table 1.** Vanguard Charitable Client Interview Family Information

	Grandparent(s)	Parent(s)	Adult Child(ren)
Family A	0	1	1
Family B	0	1	0
Family C	2	1	1
Family D	2	2	0
Family E	2	4	1

PPS DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY STATISTICS

Typically, researchers study generations using birth-year-based categorizations. In our study, however, we used alternative definitions of generations based on intra-family positional categorizations. In this format, an individual can have multiple roles within a family (e.g. a person is a parent and a child). Using PPS data, we observe the following total number of individuals within each generational cohort.<sup>2</sup>

Traditional Generations Definitions

Full Sample: 13,306			
Pre-Boomer <i>Born: before 1946</i>	Baby Boomer <i>Born: 1946-1964</i>	Generation X <i>Born: 1965-1980</i>	Millennial+ <i>Born: 1981-Present</i>
1,800	4,227	4,387	2,892

Our Intra-Family Generations Definitions

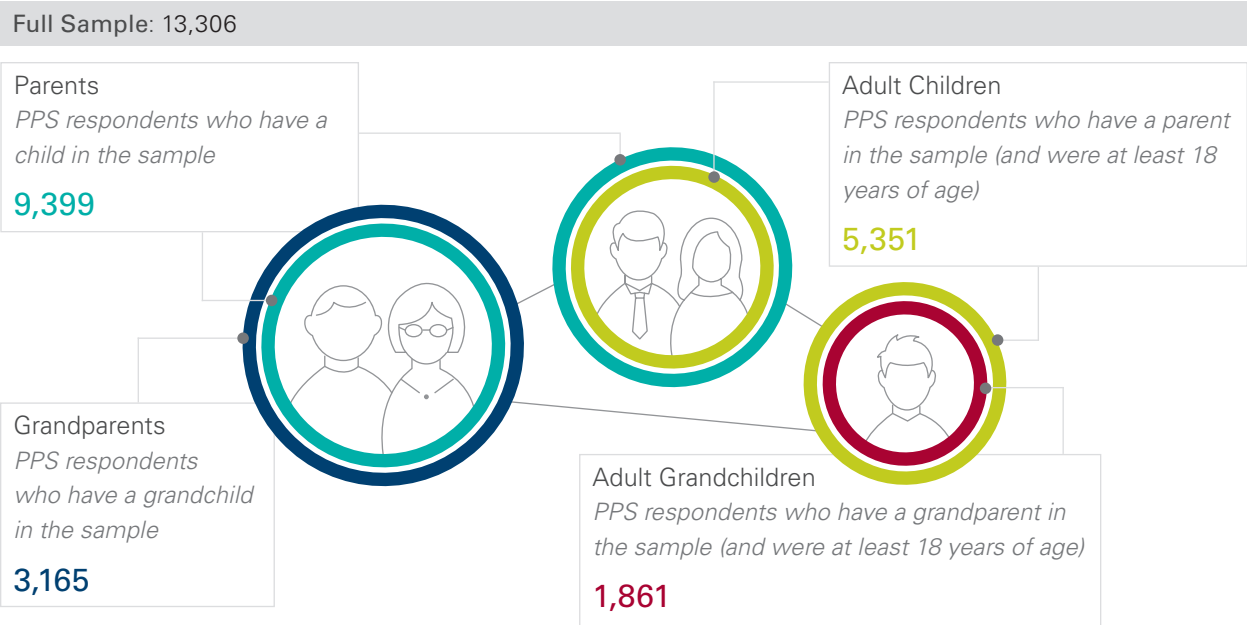


Table 2. Compilation of Traditional and Intra-Family Generations

	Full Sample	Adult Children	Parents	Adult Grandchildren	Grandparents
Full Sample		5,351	9,399	1,861	3,165
Pre-Boomer	1,800	30	1,478	0	1,238
Baby Boomer	4,227	1,269	3,316	8	1,689
Generation X	4,387	2,014	3,257	711	237
Millennial+	2,892	2,038	1,348	1,142	1

<sup>2</sup> The PSID sample, due mostly to its nature of tracking descendants of the original sample, has an ever-changing composition as new respondents enter the sample by establishing their own households as adults, and older respondents filter out of the sample (due largely to death). The bulk of the sample from 2003 is still in the sample in 2013—but, several households will have both entered and exited the sample during the decade span. While our descriptive statistics are, for simplicity sake, largely based on the 2013 wave, our analysis is done using the 6-wave entire sample, using a methodology to attempt to extract the most information possible from the total pool of respondents.

# Generational giving landscape

## TRADITIONAL GENERATIONAL GIVING TRENDS

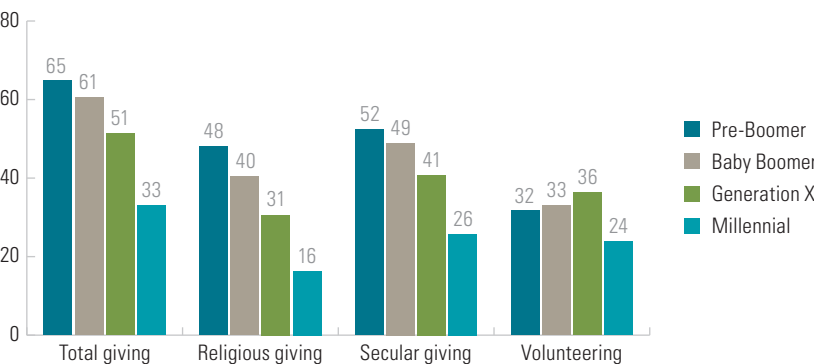
When looking at giving and volunteering behaviors through the traditional generational lens, we find that, in general, older generations give more than younger generations across all giving categories: total giving, religious giving, and secular giving.<sup>3</sup>

If we examine a single generation compared to the rest of the generations combined, the giving behaviors of Pre-Boomers, Boomers, and Millennials are statistically significantly different from the full sample (Pre-Boomers and Boomers give significantly more, while Millennials give significantly less). Generation X's giving is not statistically significantly different from the other generations combined.

However, volunteering behavior seems to peak at middle age, with the oldest and youngest generations reporting the lowest level of volunteerism.

Returning to the comparison between a single generation and the rest of the generations combined, the volunteering behaviors of Generation X and Millennials are statistically significantly different from the full sample (Generation X volunteers more and Millennials volunteer less). Neither Pre-Boomers' nor Boomers' volunteerism is statistically significantly different from the other generations combined.

**Figure 1.** Giving by Traditional Generations – All Respondents (%)



## INTRA-FAMILY GENERATIONAL GIVING TRENDS

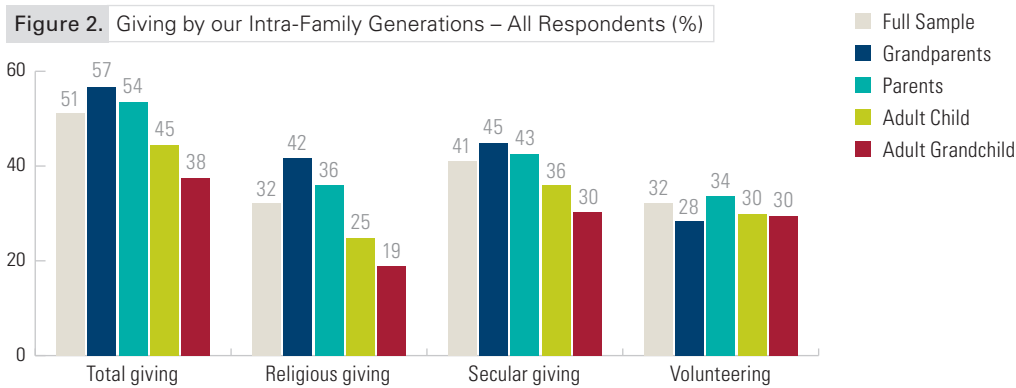
If we review these same qualities through the intra-family lens, we again find that older generations are more likely to give than younger generations (i.e., grandparents over grandchildren).

When looking at a single intra-family generation compared to the rest of the generations combined, the giving behaviors of grandparents, parents, adult children, and adult grandchildren are all statistically significantly different from the full sample (grandparents and parents give significantly more, while adult children and adult grandchildren give significantly less).

Volunteering behaviors are fairly consistent across the intra-family generations, although we find that volunteerism is lowest for the oldest generation of adults (grandparents) and highest for the parent generation.

<sup>3</sup> We should be careful not to over-generalize these results: Younger generational cohorts may have lower rates of giving because the cohorts differ in many ways that may not be accounted for here, including income, wealth, and education.

Continuing to compare a single generation to the rest of the generations combined, the volunteering behaviors of grandparents, parents, adult children, and adult grandchildren are all statistically significantly different from the full sample (parents volunteer significantly more, while grandparents, adult children, and adult grandchildren volunteer significantly less).

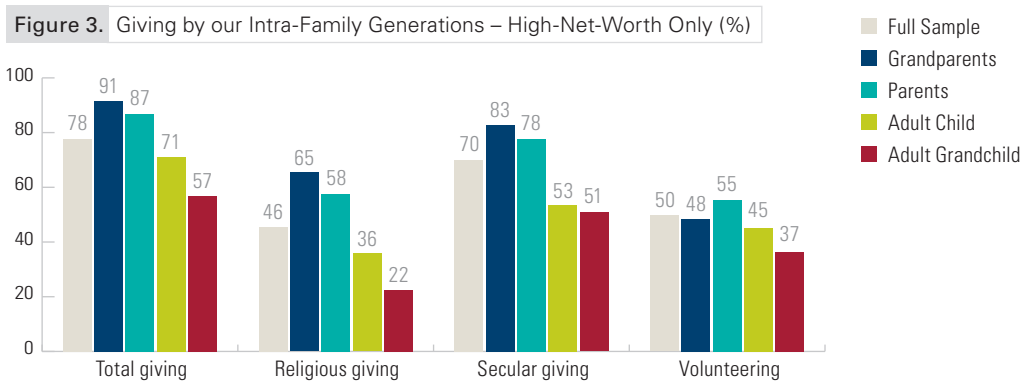


## HIGH-NET-WORTH INTRA-FAMILY GIVING TRENDS

Within high-net-worth<sup>4</sup> families, the percentages in each generation who give and volunteer are higher than the general population. Otherwise, the trends are similar. In terms of giving, older generations donate more overall, to religion, and to secular causes than do younger generations.

When looking at a single intra-family generation compared to the rest of the generations combined, the giving behaviors of grandparents, parents, adult children, and adult grandchildren are all statistically significantly different from the full sample. Grandparents and parents give significantly more, while adult children and adult grandchildren give significantly less. The two younger generations of high-net-worth respondents also volunteer less.

Within this same lens, the volunteering behaviors of parents, adult children, and adult grandchildren are all statistically significantly different from the full sample (parents volunteer significantly more, while adult children and adult grandchildren volunteer significantly less). The volunteering behavior of grandparents is not statistically significantly different from the volunteering behaviors of the other generations combined.



<sup>4</sup> High-net-worth (HNW) is defined as a household income of \$200,000 per year or more and/or assets of \$1,000,000 or more, excluding primary residence.

# Findings, detailed

How closely do parents and grandparents match their children and grandchildren in terms of their philanthropic priorities?<sup>5</sup>

## GIVING WITHIN FAMILIES

In the client interviews, the importance of donors’ backgrounds emerged as a theme. People draw on personal and professional experiences and let their ‘philanthropic autobiographies’ shape their giving decisions. In addition to income, education, wealth, and tax policy, research has shown that “charitable decision making is primarily driven by donors’ tastes and personal background. Donors often support organizations that promote their own preferences, that help people with whom they feel some affinity and that support causes that relate to their own life experiences” (Breeze, 2013).

*Unless otherwise indicated, values in the following figures report the coefficients of the relevant panel logit regression analysis. They are most easily interpreted here as a measure of strength of relation, relative to each other, and are meant to give a visual representation of the relationship among the subsectors in regards to the parent-child and grandparent-grandchild giving relationships.*

Parents’ decisions to give to charity influence their children’s decisions to give; parents who give are more likely to have children who give.

### PARENT-CHILD GIVING



Parents who **give** financially to charitable organizations are more likely to have children who also **give** financially to charitable organizations.

► For a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 0.9%.

### PARENT-CHILD GIVING AREAS

Parents and their children **give similarly to:**



#### Religious organizations

► For a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 2.1%.



#### International organizations

► For a one-percentage-point increase in parental international donation incidence, the odds of child international donating increase by 1.9%.

### A FAMILY ABROAD

Family E makes it a priority to support international charitable causes. The grandparents in Family E (interviewed together) are not certain if this interest is fueled by their heirs’ time spent abroad—all three sons studied abroad—two their junior undergraduate years and the oldest as a graduate student, and one high-school-aged granddaughter lived with a family in Argentina for six months. However, they strongly believe funding international organizations is one way they can help make the world a safer place. Family E feels if you get to know people from around the world—through charitable or educational efforts—you have the chance to foster relationships that promote long-term peace.

<sup>5</sup> For the following analyses, we looked at relationships between parents and their children and relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren for the following charitable subsectors: all (religious and secular combined), religious only, secular only, arts-related, combination purposes, education-related, environmental purposes, health-related, international purposes, basic needs, youth purposes, and other purposes.



Environmental organizations

► For a one-percentage-point increase in parental environmental donation incidence, the odds of child environmental donating increase by 1.6%.



Arts-related organizations

► For a one-percentage-point increase in parental arts donation incidence, the odds of child arts donating increase by 2.3%.

AN ARTFUL LEGACY

Active involvement in the arts is important to Family A—from art museums to local choral organizations. When his children were young and living at home, the father in Family A (interviewed) remembers taking them to choir concerts, for which his wife served on the board. While the father acknowledges that as his children grew up, they developed many of their own philanthropic and personal interests, separate from his and his wife’s, he knows his innate love for the arts has transferred to the next generation. This is evident, he believes, in his daughter’s involvement with a local theatre group and his son’s passion for photography.

The son (interviewed separately) recalls his parents’ involvement with the local art museum and choir, but he doesn’t remember attending himself. But, he acknowledges he is an avid photographer and has even started taking his children to museums. Both father and son donate to the arts.

Figure 4. Charitable Subsector Giving



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## PARENT-CHILD GIVING CONCENTRATION<sup>6</sup>

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Parents whose financial giving is **more concentrated** (they give to fewer subsectors) are more likely to have children who give financially to **religious** organizations.

Parent volunteering has a two-fold impact on children; parents who volunteer have children who volunteer *and* give.

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## PARENT VOLUNTEERING

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Parents who **volunteer** for charitable organizations are more likely to have children who also **volunteer** for charitable organizations.

- ▶ For a one-percentage-point increase in parental volunteering incidence, the odds of child volunteering increase by 0.8%.



Parents who **volunteer** for charitable organizations are more likely to have children who **give** to charitable organizations.

- ▶ For a one-percentage-point increase in parental volunteering incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 0.7%, showing parent volunteering has a significant positive effect on their children's decision to give at all.
- ▶ For a one-percentage-point increase in parental volunteering incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 1.0%, while the odds of child secular donating increase by 0.6%, showing parent volunteering has a slightly larger effect on their children's religious giving than secular giving.

### IN THE GIVING SPIRIT

The grandparents (both interviewed) in Family C do not realize it, based on the stories they shared, but their examples of volunteerism have made a significant impact on their heirs. The grandparents do not think they had an influence with their charitable efforts while their children were younger, saying they never did anything “formal” and did not set “much of an example.” They only recall spontaneous activities, such as bringing a turkey to a needy family at Thanksgiving.

However, their heirs remember differently. The oldest daughter (interviewed separately) recalls her parents' active engagement with the church and an expectation to give back financially, even at a young age, through small donation envelopes. She also remembers her parents giving their time: Her father served on the town council and her mother volunteered for many years with the Parent Teacher Organization. She even remembers the Thanksgiving meal, same as her parents; her dad asked her to go to the store to buy groceries for a dinner basket for someone in need.

The importance of giving back extends to a third generation: The grandson (interviewed separately) in Family C and son of the oldest daughter, mentions holiday traditions of giving within the family. He remembers every Christmas going with his mom to buy and deliver holiday gifts for local families in need. The grandson says this annual activity became a necessity, something he understood could make a difference. He credits his mother for inspiring a tradition of giving around the holidays. A college student now, the grandson plans to continue giving in his adult life.

<sup>6</sup> Giving concentration was measured by a Herfindahl-Hirschman index, a tool typically used in financial contexts to measure market concentration. The index is a measurement from 0 to 1, defined as the sum of the square of the percentage each subsector represents of total giving (e.g., if an individual gave 40% to religion, 40% to education, and 20% to arts, their concentration value would  $(0.40)^2 + (0.40)^2 + (0.20)^2 = 0.36$ ). The marginal effects value was not reported here as it was decided an interpretation of a marginal increase in this value was too abstract for the otherwise practical language of this report.



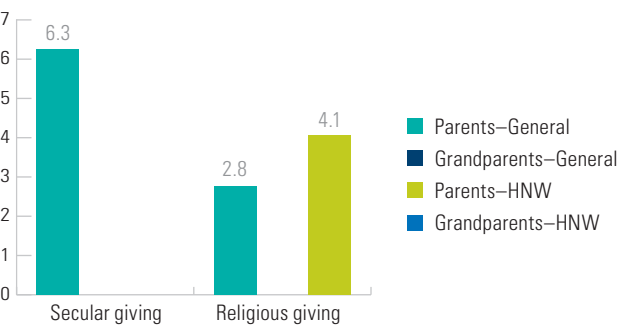
While the philanthropic priorities of parents and their children are more closely matched than those of grandparents and grandchildren, grandparents still influence giving.

PARENT-CHILD VS. GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD GIVING



Parents and children are more likely to give to similar types of charitable organizations than are grandparents and grandchildren. In other words, the philanthropic priorities of **parents** and their **children** are more **closely matched** than those of grandparents and their grandchildren.

Figure 5. Intra-Family Religious and Secular Giving – Significant Results Only<sup>7</sup>



GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD GIVING AREAS



Grandparents and their grandchildren give similarly to **arts-related** organizations (high-net-worth sample only).

► Among high-net-worth families, for a one-percentage-point increase in grandparental art donation incidence, the odds of grandchild art donating increase by 1.6%.



Grandparents and their grandchildren give dissimilarly to **basic needs** organizations.

► For a one-percentage-point increase in grandparental basic needs donation incidence, the odds of grandchild basic needs donating decrease by 0.4%.

THE SHOW GOES ON

Attending plays and concerts is a regular pastime of Family D. The family significantly supports and enjoys the arts—from the grandparents to the grandchildren. The grandfather of Family D says he and his wife (interviewed together) brought their children to many arts-related events when they were younger, and this tradition continued with their grandchildren, who now attend plays like *The Nutcracker* with them.

The youngest child (interviewed with his sister) remembers attending these events with his parents. His mother, in particular, loves going to concerts; he says her face lights up whenever they have the chance to attend together. He points to her passion for fostering his interest in the arts. His sister, the middle child, says whenever an extra ticket for a show pops up, she is asked to attend with her parents—something she credits for shaping an interest she, too, has in the arts.

<sup>7</sup> We did not obtain significant results for secular giving with the general-grandparents, HNW-parents, or HNW-grandparents, nor did we obtain significant results for religious giving with the general-grandparents or HNW-grandparents. Thus, these relationships are not shown.

How do socio-demographic factors explain the similarity or dissimilarity in philanthropic priorities between parents and their children?<sup>8</sup>

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

While intra-family relationships affect giving, so too does the environment in which the family resides. As American families become increasingly diverse—in terms of race, socio-economic status, and family structure, among other things—it becomes more important to understand how each unique socio-demographic parental attribute can affect offspring giving and volunteering behaviors.

The giving—both overall and specifically, religious—of parents with certain attributes has a stronger influence on their children's giving.

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### OVERALL GIVING PATTERNS

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**Age:** Overall giving by parents who are **closer in age** to their children has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than overall giving by parents who are further in age from their children.

- ▶ Among children with parents 30 or more years older than them, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 0.7%.
- ▶ Among children with parents less than 30 years older than them, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 1.0%.



**Family Structure:** Overall giving by parents from **intact families** who had not experienced a marital transition<sup>9</sup> has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than overall giving by parents from families where a marital transition had occurred.

- ▶ Among children from intact families, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 1.1%.
- ▶ Among children from families who have experienced a marital transition, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 0.7%.



**Helping Behavior:** Overall giving by parents who spent time **helping their children** at all within the previous year<sup>10</sup> has a **stronger influence** on their children's overall giving than parents who did not spend time helping their children.

- ▶ Among children who reported receiving help from their parents, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 1.2%.
- ▶ Among children who reported not receiving help from their parents, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental donation incidence, the odds of child donating increase by 0.7%.

<sup>8</sup> For the following analyses, we looked at relationships between parents and their children for the following charitable subsectors: all (religious and secular combined), religious only, and secular only. The one exception is with the religious attendance analyses, where we looked at both relationships between parents and their children and between grandparents and their grandchildren.

<sup>9</sup> A marital transition is any shift away from the original marital relationship, either through divorce, permanent separation, widowhood, or other relationship change.

<sup>10</sup> A helping behavior is defined as any behavior performed within the past year where a parent helped his or her child in any way, excluding financially.

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## RELIGIOUS GIVING PATTERNS

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**Race:** Religious giving by parents has a **stronger influence** on children's religious giving in **white households** than in black households.

- ▶ *Among children in white households, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 2.9%.*
- ▶ *Among children in black households, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 1.1%.*



**Head of Household Gender:** Religious giving by parents in **male-headed households** has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than in female-headed households.

- ▶ *Among children with parents in male-headed households, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 2.2%.*
- ▶ *Among children with parents in female-headed households, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 1.8%.*



**Education:** Religious giving by **college-educated** parents<sup>11</sup> has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than religious giving by non-college-educated parents.

- ▶ *Among children with college-educated parents, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 3.3%.*
- ▶ *Among children with non-college-educated parents, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 1.7%.*



**Income/Wealth:** Religious giving by **high-net-worth (HNW)** parents has a **stronger influence** on their children's religious giving than religious giving by non-HNW parents.

- ▶ *Among children from HNW families, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 3.7%.*
- ▶ *Among children from non-HNW families, for a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence, the odds of child religious donating increase by 1.9%.*

<sup>11</sup> Defined as at least one parent having a college education.



**Religious Attendance:** The frequency of (grand)parental religious attendance and (grand)parental giving patterns influence (grand)children's giving behaviors in unique ways.

For children of **high-attending parents**<sup>12</sup>, parental **religious** giving has a significant **positive effect** on child **religious giving**.

- *For a one-percentage-point increase in parental religious donation incidence among high-attending parents, the odds of child religious donating increase by 2.6%.*

Also for children of **high-attending parents**, parental **secular** giving has a significant **negative effect** on child **religious giving**.

- *For a one-percentage-point increase in parental secular donation incidence among high-attending parents, the odds of child religious donating decrease by 0.9%.*

For grandchildren of **low-attending grandparents**<sup>13</sup>, grandparent **secular** giving had a significant **negative effect** on grandchild **religious giving**.

- *For a one-percentage-point increase in grandparental secular donation incidence among low-attending parents, the odds of grandchild religious donating decrease by 1.5%.*

#### FAITH AND PHILANTHROPY

For Family E, religious traditions are important. The grandparents (interviewed together) have long belonged to a church, volunteered there, and attended services regularly.

The first generation of children in Family E (interviewed as a group) remembers this focus on religion, both through weekly church attendance and giving. Even though the family didn't have a lot of money early on and was focused on "just getting by," one son noted that when it came to the church, his parents always gave generously. Their father, who served as a church treasurer, encouraged his children to do the same, even at a young age.

Despite the family history, the children did not indicate that religious giving is a top priority for them now. However, the granddaughter in Family E (interviewed separately) expressed the opposite; religious giving is a top priority for her. While she acknowledges her family didn't attend services when growing up, she did occasionally attend with her grandparents. Both parents and grandparents, she said, "sparked" her religious giving through their overall commitment to give back.

Today, she is a church pastor and mother of two. She brings this fourth generation to church regularly and has already introduced the concept of religious giving to her toddler daughter. Through concrete actions, like placing the donation envelope in the church offering plate, or conversations on why giving matters, like explaining how a donation may help someone get access to clean drinking water, the mother hopes to cultivate a "generous heart" in her children.

Religious giving, specifically, has intertwined Family E over time, but the granddaughter emphasized that the family simply has a history of giving back—to whatever causes they are passionate about.

<sup>12</sup> High-attending parents are defined as those who reported attending a religious service 12 or more times per year.

<sup>13</sup> Low-attending grandparents are defined as those who reported attending a religious service fewer than 12 times per year.

## ESTATE GIVING

The majority of people prefer to leave their estate to family, rather than to a religious or secular charity.

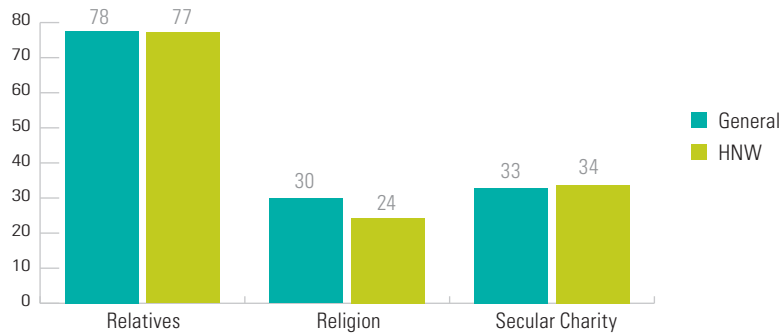
### ESTATE PREFERENCES<sup>14</sup>



In general, people prefer to leave their **estates** to **relatives** rather than to religious organizations or secular charitable organizations.

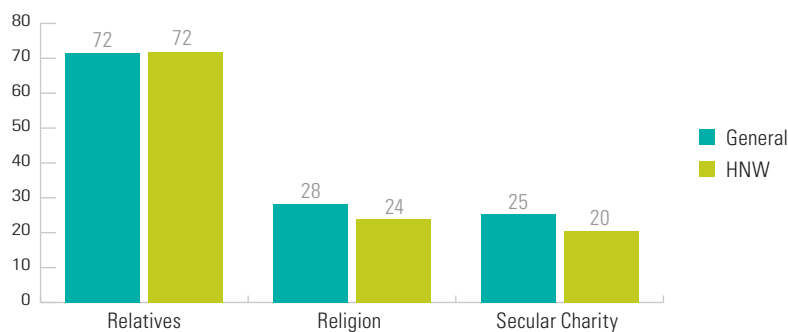
When asked whether they thought it was important to leave their estate or inheritance to one's children or other relatives, the majority of respondents (grandparents, parents, and children) indicated that it was an important goal.

**Figure 6.** Supplemental Estate Questions, 2007: Full Samples (%)



When asked whether it was important to leave one's estate or inheritance to a church, synagogue, mosque, or religious organization, more grandparents than parents or children found this to be important. Whereas, when asked whether it was important to leave one's estate or inheritance to charity, more parents and children indicated that this was an important goal, compared to grandparents.

**Figure 7.** Supplemental Estate Questions, 2007: Grandparent Samples (%)



<sup>14</sup> The estate questions were a supplemental set of questions asked only in the 2007 wave of the PPS. See *Technical Appendix* for a detailed description of the data and analytic procedure used in these analyses.

# Conclusions and implications

Although “amongst democratic nations, each generation is a new people” (Tocqueville), traditions exist within families, and philanthropic priorities and behaviors are frequently passed from parents to their children and even grandparents to their grandchildren. Looking at only the traditional generational divisions can obscure age, period, and cohort effects that influence individuals’ giving and volunteering behaviors. This research delved beneath the traditional generational surface to examine intra-family patterns of giving across the generations.

## Effects on parents and children

From the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS) panel data, we learned parents can play a major role in developing their children’s giving decisions. Specifically, parents and their children give similarly to religious, international, environmental, and arts-related charitable organizations.

Also, parents who volunteer with charitable organizations have children who are more likely to give back; but in this instance, there is a twofold impact on their children. First, parents who volunteer are more likely to have children who volunteer their time. Second, parents who volunteer are more likely to have children who donate financially to charities. If cultivating charitable behaviors in one’s children is important, parents should involve their children in volunteerism, where their actions will provide a greater philanthropic impact.

### What does this mean for parents?

Get bang for your buck: Spend your time volunteering, with or without your children. Children who witness, or even better, experience, parents’ volunteerism are more likely to volunteer themselves—and to donate, as well.

## Effects on grandparents and grandchildren

The charitable giving behaviors of parents and children are more closely matched than the charitable giving behaviors of grandparents and their grandchildren. Specifically, high-net-worth grandparents and their grandchildren give similarly to arts-related charitable organizations, while grandparents and their grandchildren give dissimilarly to basic needs organizations. However, grandparents can still cultivate their grandchildren’s philanthropy by actively engaging with them in charitable ventures, like attending religious services or artistic performances together.

### What does this mean for grandparents?

Cultivate your grandchildren’s philanthropic interests by participating in charitable activities together. Create an experience; for example, volunteer with them at a soup kitchen, take them to the theatre or a museum, or provide them with donation envelopes to give at church.

Somewhat surprisingly, grandparents and their grandchildren give dissimilarly to basic needs organizations. This could be due to a time period effect; many grandparents grew up during an era when food and basic resources were more limited than they are today. Their grandchildren, having not experienced widespread scarcity, do not prioritize giving to such basic needs organizations. Future research should look into this weak, but potentially meaningful, dissimilarity in giving priorities between the generations.

## Effects of intergenerational differences

While financial giving and volunteering take place during one's lifetime, estate giving is another way intra-family generational influence occurs. Leaving their estates to relatives is a top priority for grandparents, parents, and children. However, responses diverge when the generations are asked to name a second group to which they would like to leave their estates. Grandparents prefer to leave their estates to religious organizations, while both parents and children prefer leaving their estates to secular charities. Whether this difference in estate giving priorities is due to age effects or cohort effects should matter to nonprofit organizations (both secular and religious) that rely on estate giving to support their missions and initiatives. Future research in this area could help untangle the relationship between age, cohort, and estate giving priorities.

### What does this mean for nonprofit organizations?

Tap into the giving traditions within families. Volunteering is a great tool to do so: Consider developing intra-family volunteer opportunities that allow the entire family to participate (e.g. multi-generation-friendly activity that is offered outside the work day) and develop the natural interests that are born from engaging together.

This difference in philanthropic priority areas from the PPS data can be explained by the client interviews Vanguard Charitable conducted. Overall, grandparents interviewed explained that religion has played a large and important role in their lives. The importance of being religiously affiliated, actively participating in religious services, and giving to religious causes was generally less for parents than for grandparents, and less still for children than for parents.

Also from the case study interviews, we learned successive generations tend to be more open to supporting multiple issues or causes, as opposed to concentrating their giving in a single subsector (often religion). From both the case study interviews and PPS data, a relationship between more concentrated

giving and religious giving, and less concentrated giving and secular giving, is shown. The PPS data show that parents who do concentrate their giving (and thus give to fewer subsectors) are more likely to have children who give financially to religious organizations. As the generations pass, a trend toward less religious and less concentrated financial giving has emerged.

While the Vanguard Charitable clients interviewed generally felt that influence in philanthropic behaviors passed from grandparents to parents, and parents to children, the flow of influence did not necessarily always move in one direction. Older relatives (grandparents and parents) failed to recall many occasions when their younger relatives (grandchildren or children) had directly approached them about giving or volunteering with a preferred organization. However, younger relatives seem to indirectly influence their older relatives' giving, as parents said they supported organizations and causes related to their children. For example, families often make donations to their children's or grandchildren's schools.

A major goal of this study was to determine how closely parents and grandparents matched their children and grandchildren in terms of their philanthropic priorities. From the PPS panel data and Vanguard Charitable client interviews, we found parents can strongly influence their children's philanthropic behaviors—and grandparents have a role, too. Simultaneously, children can influence their parents' and grandparents' financial giving and volunteering behaviors.

## Effects of socio-demographic factors

A second key question we explored in this report was whether socio-demographic factors could help explain the similarities or dissimilarities in philanthropic priorities between parents and their children. From the PPS panel data, we discovered several socio-demographic factors influence giving across the generations, including: age, race, gender, education, income and wealth, religiosity, family structure, and “helping” behaviors.

In terms of overall giving behaviors, we learned it is easier for parents who are closer in age (30 years or less) to their children to influence their children’s giving behaviors than older parents. This could be because parents who are closer in age to their children have more shared experiences and perspectives, than parents who have children later in life. Also, parents from families who have not experienced shifts in their composition (through divorce, death, etc.) are more likely to influence their children’s philanthropic giving behaviors. This finding could be due to the fact that families who remain intact over time cultivate and reinforce their giving values through a shared physical environment. Finally, parents who spend time helping their children have more of an influence on their children’s giving than parents who do not spend time helping their children. It seems that the more time parents spend with their children—either simply living under the same roof or by helping them with various tasks—the easier it is for parents to transfer their philanthropic priorities to their children.

Specifically around religious giving behaviors, we found white households have a stronger influence on their children’s religious giving than black households. The religious giving in male-headed households and households headed by both a male and female parent has a stronger impact on children’s religious giving than does religious giving in female-headed households. College-educated parents are more likely to influence their children’s religious giving than non-college-educated parents. Finally, the religious giving in high-net-worth households influences the religious giving of children more strongly than does similar giving in non-high-net-worth households.

### What does this mean for families?

No matter your background, you still influence your family’s philanthropic behaviors. While the specific organizations your family supports may change over time, the value of “giving back” gets passed down. The best step: volunteer together or give together. Engaging in a charitable activity together is more effective at promoting charitable interests than simply encouraging giving.

Since not all socio-demographic characteristics are malleable, parents and grandparents whose goal is to help shape and guide the philanthropic behaviors of their children and grandchildren should focus their efforts on financial giving and volunteering. From the Vanguard Charitable case study interviews, we discovered that grandparents have a strong desire to inspire younger generations to be generous in their charitable giving and volunteering behaviors. While many of their grandchildren were not yet financially secure enough to give, the grandparents interviewed hope their example (of giving and volunteering) would have a positive effect on the future philanthropic behaviors of their grandchildren.

Also, from the interviews, we learned parents and grandparents who actively engage the younger generations in financial giving and volunteering are more likely to have children and grandchildren who actively pursue their own philanthropic endeavors. While the specific types of causes the generations support shift over time, the value of “giving back” certainly gets passed down. Engaging children or grandchildren in philanthropic activities (e.g., through participation in philanthropic events, through a family foundation) promotes the adoption of philanthropy as a priority for the younger generations more than simply encouraging them to be charitable.



## Next steps

As America continues its current demographic transition—with the Baby Boomer generation approaching retirement and the Millennial generation establishing its economic influence—it is important for donors and advisors who work closely with individual donors to develop a fuller understanding of both inter- and intra-generational philanthropic giving behaviors.

Our report sheds light on ways parents and grandparents are currently influencing their children's and grandchildren's financial giving and volunteering behaviors. The report also examines trends in giving based on socio-demographic dimensions. These trends become increasingly important to the philanthropic sector in the changing American landscape of the 21st century. Nevertheless, since grandparents, parents, and their children often share preferences, environments, and patterns of income, wealth, and consumption, we should continue to see connections between the generations, at least within families.

We have only addressed some of the channels through which families shape their offspring's attitudes about giving, and future research should continue exploring the tradition of giving within families. Our project examined intra-family connections across generations to learn about the transmission of giving attitudes and behaviors within families. We have offered new insights into the factors associated with generosity between family members and provided a first-of-its-kind look at the transmission of giving behaviors from grandparents to grandchildren, in addition to looking at the parent-child dynamic. Future research should continue illuminating the ways the tradition of giving gets passed down through the generations, both within and between families.

# Technical Appendix

## METHODOLOGY

### Data

The dataset is unbalanced panel data in units of individual-years, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 6 observations per individual. Data were collected once every two years, from 2003-2013. Given the Panel Study of Income Dynamic's (PSID) set-up of following an initial data sample (identified and initially sampled in 1968) down through generations, the parents (and grandparents) of individuals could be identified. While there are more data available for the parents (and grandparents) prior to the 2003 sample, this was the first year in which the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS), with all charitable organization categories, and volunteering details were added to the PSID, collecting detailed information on giving patterns (and in some years volunteering patterns, as well). As such, our adult children (and adult grandchildren) samples are observations for which a parent (or grandparent) is in the sample at least once during the six 2003-2013 sample years.

The philanthropy questions in the survey begin by asking if the respondent's household donated \$25 or more in money, property, or assets to charity in the previous calendar year (so the questions technically are dealing with the years 2002-2012). Eleven subsectors are then defined and asked about, which we broadly group as religious giving, and the other ten categories are combined as "secular" giving. First they are asked if they gave to these subsectors, and if yes, they are then asked how much they gave. For this paper, much of our analysis rests on the giving screen questions, with less attention paid to the amounts; this could be an avenue for future exploration.

Within this paper, we discuss two areas of giving: religious and secular. Religious giving is giving for "religious purposes or spiritual development—for example to a church, synagogue, mosque, TV or radio ministry" and specifically not donations to "schools, hospitals, and other charities run by religious organizations."

The following ten types of giving were combined into a single category for much of this paper, "secular" giving.

1. Combination purposes giving: giving to "any organization that served a combination of purposes", e.g., the United Way.
2. Basic needs giving: giving to "organizations that help people in need of food, shelter, or other basic necessities."
3. Health giving: giving to "health care or medical research organizations. For example, to hospitals, nursing homes, mental health facilities, cancer, heart and lung associations, or telethons."
4. Education giving: giving "toward educational purposes. For example, colleges, grade schools, PTAs, libraries, or scholarship funds."
5. Youth giving: giving to "organizations that provide youth or family services, such as to scouting, boys' and girls' clubs, sports leagues, Big Brothers or Sisters, foster care, or family counseling."
6. Arts & Culture giving: giving to "organizations that support or promote the arts, culture, or ethnic awareness, such as, to a museum, theatre, orchestra, public broadcasting, or ethnic cultural awareness."
7. Neighborhood giving: giving to "organizations that improve neighborhoods and communities, such as, to community associations or service clubs."
8. Environmental giving: giving to "organizations that preserve the environment, such as, for conservation efforts, animal protection, or parks."
9. International giving: giving to "organizations that provide international aid or promote world peace, such as, international children's funds, disaster relief, or human rights."
10. Other giving: giving to organizations other than those listed above.

Volunteering has also been asked about by subsector, but for this paper we only examined overall volunteering. It was also asked about for the previous calendar year, similarly to giving.

Giving data are available for all six waves in the sample; volunteer data are available for 3 of the 6 waves (2003, 2005, and 2011). The estate questions, however, were a supplemental set of questions given only in the 2007 wave. While the bulk of our total sample responded to these questions, having only one year of answers changes our methodological approach, as well as more significantly reducing our composite parent/grandparent sample (for giving, as long as a parent or grandparent answered the questions in any wave we can include some information about them; here they would have had to answer in that exact wave). Due to this, we cannot take full advantage of the panel construction of our data; instead, these questions were analyzed as if the data were only cross-sectional.

### Key Variable Construction

To maximize sample size, as well as to emphasize overall effects over year-to-year variation, while respondent data are in a panel format, parent (and grandparent) giving information in the reported analyses was collapsed so sample dates between the adult children and parents (or grandchildren and grandparents) did not have to match. This was done by creating our variable of interest for parental (or grandparental) giving as a percentage: The number of times they reported giving divided by the number of times they were in the sample (this, incidentally, gave us a convenient way to handle cases of multiple parents or multiple grandparents within the sample). The same construction was used for volunteering.

Religious attendance was deemed “high” if the respondents answered they had attended religious services 12 or more times in the prior calendar year. To have a sample that was stable year-to-year, parents and grandparents were considered “high” attenders if they ever answered they attended religious services 12 or more times in a year.

### Regression Analysis

The key variables discussed above then served as independent variables in our analyses, typically with a giving dummy as the dependent variable. Other independent variables used to construct controls in these regressions were respondent age, sex, working status, race, income, net worth (not including home), education, region, number of children, and dummies for dividend income, transfer payments, year, and low-income oversample. These were then used in a random-effects panel logit with errors clustered at the family level. Odds ratios for the parent (or grandparent) giving variables were calculated at a one-percentage-point increase level.

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